

Oral History Interview

with

ADMIRAL GEORGE G. BURKLEY

October 17, 1967
Washington, D.C.

By William McHugh

For the John F. Kennedy Library

McHUGH: Dr. Burkley when did you first meet John F. Kennedy?

BURKLEY: I had the opportunity of meeting John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, approximately two months after he had appointed me as physician at the White House. Assistant physician to the President, as a matter of fact, was more near the designation. During the first two months I was not given the opportunity to meet him. However, one day as the President was leaving the elevator, I was at the office which was then occupied by Dr. [Janet] Travell and I suggested that maybe I should meet the President. She stopped him in the corridor and I was introduced. That was my first official meeting with the President. [phone call]

McHUGH: Dr. Burkley, how were you appointed to the White House?

BURKLEY: Well, this is rather a long story. I had been asked by the Surgeon General of the Navy to be present at Camp David on each occasion that President Eisenhower went to Camp David. This period

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I can't give exact timing on that, but it was--con- sidering the job that was being done--it was not excessive.

McHUGH: I see. Do your conclusions differ at all with the Warren report of the circumstances or cause of death?

BURKLEY: My conclusion in regard to the cause of death was the bullet wound which involved the skull. The discussion as to whether a previous bullet also enters into it, but as far as the cause of death the immediate cause was unquestionably the bullet which shattered the brain and the calvarium.

McHUGH: I see. The brain and the what?

BURKLEY: And the skull, calvarium.

McHUGH: I see. Do you agree with the Warren Report on the number of bullets that entered the President's body?

BURKLEY: I would not care to be quoted on that. ✓

McHUGH: I see. Under the best circumstances would it have been possible to save the life of the President if all indicated medical procedures had been carried out successfully?

BURKLEY: It is unquestionably in my opinion that the President could not have survived, under any circumstances, nor regardless of who, or how many procedures were available, or what equipment was available. When I examined him, as I stated earlier, he was essentially no longer living. There may have been some cardiac action, but that was it [phone call] The physicians at the hospital in Dallas were completely justified, and were performing as any group of competent physicians should do, in that, until it is unquestionable that life does not exist, all efforts should be made to sustain

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Narrator George G. Burkley Address 3507 Preston Ct.

Chevy Chase, Md.

Biographical information:

Physician; naval officer; b. Pitts., Aug 29, 1902; B.S., U. Pitts., 1926, M.D., 1928; postgrad. U. Minn., 1929-32; Intern St. Francis Hosp., Pitts., 1928-29; resident fellow internal medicine Mayo Clinic, 1929-32; fellow cardiology U. Pitts., 1933-34, asst. prof. medicine, 1934-41; practice medicine, specializing internal medicine and cardiology, Pitts., 1934-41; commd. Lt. comdr., M.C. USN, 1941; advanced through grades to rear admiral, 1961; asst. physician to President Johnson, 1961-69.

Interviewer T. H. Baker

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Promotion on
Stamps on Dr.
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